

TESTIMONY OF MS. NICOLE NASON  
NOMINEE FOR THE POSITION OF ADMINISTRATOR OF THE NATIONAL  
HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION  
BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE AND TRANSPORTATION  
FEBRUARY 7, 2006

Chairman Stevens, Co-Chairman Inouye, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to be considered for the position of Administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration at the Department of Transportation. I am humbled and honored that President Bush and Secretary Mineta would offer me this opportunity to continue to serve in this Administration.

As the mother of two small children, daughter of a police chief, and car crash victim, highway safety is not an abstract issue to me, but rather a matter I take intensely seriously. As this Committee is well-aware, in 2004, 42,636 people died on our nation's roads; 2.8 million people were injured, and the cost to society was a staggering \$230 billion. Car crashes are the leading cause of death for people ages 3 to 33 and I accepted the President's nomination for this important position to reduce the toll of motor vehicles crashes on American families.

After I was confirmed as the Assistant Secretary for Government Affairs, Secretary Mineta gave me one charge: to help pass the strongest possible highway safety legislation as part of the surface transportation reauthorization bill. The result was SAFETEA-LU, a statute containing significant safety provisions largely written by members of this Committee. As the Secretary's main liaison to Capitol Hill, I was pleased and proud to play a role in helping shape this landmark highway safety law. The challenge for the agency now is to effectively implement what Congress has enacted.

I also plan, if confirmed, to go beyond the SAFETEA-LU roadmap and address other areas in highway safety where greater gains can be realized. Mr. Chairman, if you open the metro section of any major newspaper on any given day, you will invariably find a teenage highway fatality story, and alcohol will often be involved. In fact, nearly a quarter of drivers age 15 to 20 who were killed in crashes had a blood alcohol level above the legal limit of .08. While teen driving is primarily and properly a state issue, the federal government can offer guidance, resources and leadership to the states to address this problem. If confirmed, I intend to encourage this debate so state policymakers can make informed decisions on how best to protect their youth. In addition, I believe we also need to tackle the issue of elderly drivers. As the baby boomer generation evolves into retirement, the elderly driver issue will become more important for the agency. If confirmed, I plan to expand on the programs already underway at NHTSA to minimize any potential loss of life.

Mr. Chairman, there is hardly a family in America that hasn't been impacted by a car crash. I am grateful to have my family with me today, but I am especially proud to have my father, retired police Chief Philip Robilotto. As the lieutenant in command of the

highway patrol bureau, my father ran one of the earliest Stop DWI initiatives in New York and he was one of the first-ever Motorcycle Safety Foundation certified instructors. He taught me my first lessons regarding the importance of road and vehicle safety.

Congress has given NHTSA significant resources and authority to attack this problem. I am eager to use my legal training, my DOT experience, and my leadership and management skills so the tools Congress provided in SAFETEA-LU translates into lives saved and injuries prevented. Thank you for your consideration and I would be happy to answer any questions.